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AUTHOR Archer, Richard L.; And Others
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ABSTRACT

The effects of an instigator's and a respondent's disclosure on impressions of the revealing respondent were examined in a pair of experiments. The first experiment assessed the effects of both own and other's disclosure on a participant perceiver. After meeting a confederate partner, female undergraduate subjects (N=83) were induced to make an intimate or superficial disclosure by means of a "forced compliance" procedure. In return, their (videotaped) partner then disclosed on either three intimate or three superficial topics. Subjects who made intimate disclosures reported no more attraction toward the partner than did those who made superficial disclosures, but a clear effect for other's disclosure was found in the impression rating analysis. Subjects formed more favorable impressions of the confederate when she disclosed intimately (the revealer-liking effect). Comparisons made between these data and those of the second experiment (an observer replication using the subjects' actual disclosure tapes and the manipulations from the first experiment) showed that female observer subjects predicted greater attraction on the part of participants who had made intimate disclosures than those who made superficial disclosures. Additionally, subjects also differed with the participant in their perceptions of the confederate. (Author)

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Impressions of A Disclosing Other Following Own Disclosing

Richard L. Archer, John H. Berg, and Thomas E. Runge

University of Texas at Austin

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A number of recent experiments have been aimed at describing the link between self-disclosure and the impressions of the revealer formed by the recipient (e.g., Derlega, Harris, & Chaikin, 1973; Daher & Banikiotes, 1976; Jones & Archer, 1976; Wortman, Adesman, Herman, & Greenberg, 1976). Unfortunately all of them have varied some aspect of the situation or the revealer's disclosure itself. None have manipulated the intimacy of the perceiver's own disclosure within the interaction. One's own prior disclosure might well be an important determinant of attraction toward another revealer. Three differing accounts of the potential biasing effect of a perceiver's own disclosure have been proposed by Chaikin and Derlega (1974).

First of all, there is the notion made popular by Jourard (1964) and the humanists that disclosing oneself is a self-actualizing, intrinsically satisfying experience. If so, then some of this good feeling may rub off on anyone who is present.

Alternatively, the disclosing perceiver may engage in a self-perception process along lines described by Bem (1972). By this analysis a person who voluntarily disclosed intimate information should infer that he or she must have liked and trusted the target. After all, our usual confidants are our friends and relations.

In addition to these two direct paths from one's own act of disclosure to a favorable impression of the hearer, a more complex formula for biasing effects is suggested by Chaikin and Derlega's (1974b) liking for the norm breaker results. In this experiment a person who returned disclosure at a level of intimacy discrepant with what she had received

(either low intimacy after receiving high intimacy or high after receiving low) was disliked by observer subjects. These results imply that the later intimacy of a target person may also interact with the perceiver's own initial intimacy to determine attraction. Presumably, perceivers expect and want to be responded to in kind.

It should be taken into account, however, that the subjects in the norm-breaker study were essentially role-playing bystanders. They were not participants in an actual exchange. This is a reasonable procedure in an experiment to detect norms of reciprocity. On the other hand, inconsistencies between studies employing role-playing and "real" situation methods (see Miller, 1972) and the differences in attribution between actors and observers (Jones & Nisbett, 1972) suggest that caution is warranted in generalizing these results to the impressions of participants.

Experiment I was conducted to determine whether making a disclosure would affect the perceiver's impressions of a revealing target. Subjects were induced to disclose information on an intimate or non-intimate topic by means of a forced-compliance procedure (Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959). Then they received either an intimate or non-intimate disclosure from the target person to complete the 2 x 2 factorial design.

An observer replication of the study was later run as Experiment II. In this second experiment subjects listened to the disclosures of subjects in Experiment I, so that any actor-observer differences could be ascertained.

Experiment I

Method

Subjects. Eighty-three female undergraduates from the introductory psychology course at the University of Texas at Austin participated as

subjects as part of their course requirement. Three were dropped from the study because they suspected the authenticity of the confederate. The remaining 80 subjects were distributed randomly and in equal numbers among the four experimental conditions. Twenty subjects were run in each condition by each of two experimenter-confederate teams in order to complete the study more quickly and increase the generalizability of the results

Procedure. The experiment was explained to subjects as an investigation of the acquaintanceship process. They were told that they would take turns describing themselves to their partner. The second subject in the dyad was in reality a confederate. The experimenter introduced the subject and her confederate partner and showed them to separate rooms.

Communication between them was supposedly achieved through matching T.V. cameras and microphones. The subject and her confederate partner were to see and hear each other on video-monitors. The elaborate set-up was ostensibly required so that an audio-visual record of the session could be obtained.

Both were told that a topic list would be provided to serve as a guideline for their descriptions. Then a bogus drawing was held to convince the subject that she had been selected to go first merely by chance.

The perceiver intimacy manipulation. Alone with the subject, the experimenter confronted her with a pair of topic lists, List A and List B. List A was made up of eight topics modified from the Taylor and Altman (1966) intimacy-rated stimuli with an average scale value of 3.35. The average value of the eight List B topics was 7.79. She was asked to choose an opening topic to talk on for about two minutes from one of the lists to get things started.

The experimenter covertly checked whether the low or the high perceiver intimacy condition was to be run. If it was low intimacy, then he requested she choose from List A, describing it as made up of "... relatively common things, the kind you might talk about with someone at a party." If high intimacy was scheduled he asked that she choose from the List B topics which were said to be "... more personal, the sort of things you'd generally talk about with a friend. Research requirements were the only reason given for the request and subjects were assured that they were free to choose from the other list if they really preferred it.

After agreeing to select from the low or high intimacy list and settling on a topic, subjects were given a couple of minutes to collect their thoughts. When the experimenter returned she was asked to make her disclosure to her confederate partner watching from the next room. At the end of her disclosure, she filled out a first impression attraction rating of the confederate and a self-rating.

The target intimacy manipulation. Ostensibly because the subject had gotten the exchange going, the confederate was supposedly offered a single list of topics and asked to choose three of them to reveal to the subject. What the subject actually saw was a videotape in which the confederate disclosed at either a low or a high level of intimacy. In the low intimacy tape the confederate first discussed her liking for country music acquired since coming to Austin. Then she remarked on her positive reaction to President Carter's position on human rights and energy conservation. She concluded by revealing her future plans to become a nurse. In the high intimacy tape the confederate began by discussing her relationship with a best friend from childhood. Then she revealed how her feelings

had been hurt when her alcoholic brother wrecked her car after promising to stop drinking in order to have it on loan. Finally, she confided that her greatest fear was that she might not succeed in college and let her parents down. During the airing of the videotape, the subject was able to refer to the confederate's fictional list of topics.

At the conclusion of the tape the subject again made attraction ratings of the confederate. She also rated the confederate on a number of trait dimensions. Afterward, subjects were fully debriefed, ending the experiment.

Results

As a prerequisite to testing our hypotheses, it was necessary that the subjects accurately perceive their own level of disclosure intimacy as well as the confederate's. Immediately after their own disclosure in the high perceiver intimacy condition, subjects did rate their descriptions as more intimate than did subjects in the low intimacy condition ($p < .001$). Furthermore, after viewing the confederate subjects correctly rated her as more intimate in the high than in the low target intimacy condition ($p < .001$).

Before and after the target intimacy manipulation subjects indicated attraction toward the confederate by checking how much they liked their partner, wanted to get to know her better, and would have liked having her as a close friend. Subjects' ratings on these three dimensions were summed to form an initial and a final attraction index. These indices became the repeated measures factor in a 2 (perceiver intimacy) X 2 (target intimacy) X 2 (initial and final attraction) X 2 (experimenter-confederate team) analysis performed as the major test of the hypotheses.

No own disclosure effects on attraction of any kind emerged in the analysis. Only an overall gain in attraction toward the confederate from the initial to the final measure was significant ($p < .001$). In addition, their own disclosure had no impact on how happy, trusting, open, or nervous subjects felt.

Since subjects within conditions chose different topics at different degrees of intimacy, we dropped manipulated perceiver intimacy from the analysis and substituted subjects' own ratings of their intimacy split at the median into low and high groups. Still no effects of own disclosure on attraction were found.

An index was formed from the nine personality trait ratings taken after the confederate's disclosure. The analysis of this index showed only a revealer liking effect: subjects who watched the highly intimate target person rated her more favorably ($p < .05$). In terms of the individual items, those who listened to the intimate confederate rated her as significantly more genuine, sensitive, open, and trusting (all p's $< .04$) and as more mature at a marginal level significance ($p < .12$).

It is probably appropriate to consider the trait index a more sensitive measure of attraction. Differences between the high and low intimate target person on the final attraction items were in the same direction but not significant.

These positive impressions may stem in part from subjects' feelings that the target's disclosures were personalistic in the Jones and Davis (1965) sense; that is, they were produced by the subject's presence. Subjects who watched the highly intimate confederate rated her behavior as marginally more influenced by her feelings about themselves as opposed

to her basic personality than did subjects who watched the low intimate confederate ($p < .09$).

It would appear that at least within a laboratory setting perceivers are much more attuned to the disclosures of their partner in the interaction than to their own insofar as impressions are concerned. We do not claim to have proved the null hypothesis, but Experiment I offers no support for own disclosure biases in typical disclosure--attraction research. There is no evidence that revealer liking effects are confounded with self-perception.

Experiment II

The absence of own disclosure effects for the actor in the situation does not necessarily mean that observers who witness the exchange will not make inferences linking her attraction to her disclosure. According to Jones and Nisbett's (1972) reasoning, we should expect just such a difference. Observers in the experiments of Jones and his colleagues (e.g., Jones & Harris, 1967; Snyder & Jones, 1974) ignored strong situational pressures to a large extent, allowing behavior to engulf the field (Heider, 1959). Experiment II was conducted to determine whether observers allowed to witness the actual disclosures of actors in Experiment I would infer liking from intimacy and whether such an inference would interact with the level of intimacy of a subsequent disclosure from the actor's target.

Method

Subjects. Eighty-seven female undergraduates from the University of Texas at Austin introductory psychology courses participated as subjects. Three were dropped for suspicion and four because they failed to understand the instructions, leaving 80 subjects evenly distributed among the experimental

conditions. The two original experimenter-confederate teams were preserved in Experiment II, and each team ran half the subjects.

Procedure. Each subject in Experiment II was asked to predict or guess how a different one of the original actor subjects in Experiment I had felt about the confederate. Both the actor and the confederate were described as students like themselves in the introductory psychology courses who participated in the acquaintanceship experiment the previous semester. Each aspect of the procedure in Experiment I was described in detail and the forced-compliance perceiver intimacy instructions were read in full. The various measures were presented to the observer subjects at the same point in the procedure that they were given to the actors. The wording of each measure was modified slightly so that each item called for a prediction concerning the actor's attraction for the target person and impressions of her.

Results

Both the check on the actor intimacy and the check on the target intimacy variables were significant. In each case, high intimacy was rated higher than low intimacy (p's $< .05$).

The three attraction items taken before and after the target intimacy manipulation were again summed to form an initial and a final attraction index. When the analysis that included these indices as a repeated measures factor was performed, no significant effects involving the manipulated actor intimacy variable were found. Thus our observers did not believe that the non-matching intimate target person was considered a norm-breaker by the actor. We did find a significant target intimacy x attraction measure interaction indicating that observers predicted higher attraction

for the more intimate target ($p < .002$).

In truth, we were not particularly surprised that the observers failed to use the actor intimacy manipulation as a bench mark from which to gauge the level of the actor's attraction. The variation in topics and in what actors actually said about them might be expected to override any inferences based upon the acceptance of the low or high intimacy list. We proceeded immediately to an analysis in which the observers' perceptions of the actors' intimacy were split at the median into low and high groups and substituted for the manipulated actor intimacy variable in the repeated measures design. This analysis yielded a significant main effect for perceived actor intimacy on attraction toward the target ($p < .001$). It was the actor's behavior and not her choice of list that guided the observer's attraction prediction. Behavior, this time in the form of self-disclosure, again engulfs the field. The perceived actor intimacy variable also interacted with the attraction measure variable ($p < .04$). This was because the effect of perceived actor intimacy was stronger before the target person responded.

Interestingly enough, although the actors did not differ by intimacy condition in their perceptions of how happy, trusting, open, and nervous they felt after their disclosure, observers predicted a difference. With perceived actor intimacy as the variable, observers believed that the actors who disclosed more intimately also felt more trusting, more open (p's $< .001$), and more nervous ($p < .02$).

The observers accurately predicted the actors' more favorable impressions of the intimate target person on the trait index ($p < .03$). However, an examination of the individual ratings for particular traits points up some differences. Observers correctly guessed that the actors in Experi-

ment I regarded the highly intimate target person as more sensitive and open (p's $< .001$) and trusting ($p < .06$), but did not predict that she was seen as more genuine. Furthermore, the observers predicted that the high revealing confederate was considered less well-adjusted by the actor ($p < .02$). It would seem that the revealer liking effect exists in part in the eyes of the beholder.

In contrast to Experiment I actors, the observers of Experiment II believed that the intimacy of the high revealing target was dispositionally produced. Observer subjects who watched the intimate target person rated her behavior as more influenced by her basic personality than did observers who watched the less intimate target ($p < .004$).

General Discussion

This pair of experiments was designed to investigate the effects of an actor's own disclosure intimacy on her reactions to a revealing target person and to compare the actor's actual perceptions and feelings to the predictions made by an observer. It failed to demonstrate biases in attraction and impressions brought about by disclosure from the perceiver, but it did uncover interesting actor-observer differences.

Several possible explanations could be advanced to account for the missing own disclosure effects. One, of course, is that there are not any! Much as the data from Experiment I suggest each of the participants in a disclosure exchange may be focused upon the revelations made by the other, rather than her own. Another possibility is that the justification offered by the experimenter in his request for intimacy constituted sufficient explanation for any intimate remarks the actor made. If so, then

the self-perception hypothesis did not receive a fair test. Moreover, a third possibility is that many of the subjects may have trivialized their intimate topic, perhaps even to resist what they felt was an invasion of privacy. Which one is the right one?

Reviewing these potential explanations in the light of recent data, we are inclined to answer all the above. An experiment just completed by John Berg and I found that when the perceiver's disclosure comes after the disclosure of the target person, the perceiver's intimacy was unrelated as in a typical disclosure-attraction study to attraction. On the other hand, if the perceiver discloses first, then the relationship between intimacy and impressions was positive. The perceiver's disclosure intimacy in this study was not manipulated. Subjects freely chose from a set of topics at differing levels of intimacy. So it would seem that a self-perception effect may occur, but only under very limited circumstances; namely, when virtually no self-information has been provided by the target person. Furthermore, the perceiver's intimate disclosure must be completely uncoerced. But the particulars of this recent Archer and Berg study should be saved for another time.

The second goal of the present pair of experiments, comparing the actor's viewpoint in disclosure exchange to that of an observer, succeeded admirably. While the actor subjects in Experiment I based their perceptions upon the disclosure of the target person in the situation rather than their own intimacy, the observer subjects of Experiment II viewed the intimacy of the actors as an indicator of attraction. Actors formed positive impressions of the revealing target person and felt to some degree that the disclosure was personalistic. Observers, however, guessed at a

positive, but somewhat mixed impression and predicted that intimate disclosure from the target person would be seen as the product of her personality dispositions.

That such actor-observer differences in impressions of a revealer exist suggests that the spate of disclosure studies that attempt to simulate live interactions, sometimes even friendships, with pencil and paper scenarios should be interpreted with caution. While role-playing studies are sometimes interesting in their own right and useful in generating hypotheses, they are not substitutes for data gathered during a live interaction.

Besides, this methodological warning for researchers, the present experiments have something to offer attribution theorists. They demonstrate that Jones and Nisbett's (1972) analysis of actor-observer differences in causal attribution may be extended to the realm of self-disclosure. They also imply that Bem's (1972) self-perception theory generally may not characterize the attribution process of perceivers who participate in a disclosure exchange.

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